

Allison Carlson

Foundations of College Writing- Dr. Sherry

02/23/15

College & Time Management

Problem

Almost immediately after becoming an adult, for many, it's time to go off to college to be on your own for the first time. Many go in with the mindset that they will have school and academics to worry about and that's it, "no big deal". Once there, it is found that there is a struggle to balance an enormous amount of responsibilities, on your own, right away with no experience doing so. One of the biggest obstacles is finding the time to fulfill obligations which puts a ton of stress on students and only adds to what can hurt them academically. How do students facilitate their time to avoid stress and anxiety? First I will give background information from articles about how time management connects to college life: Comstock's (2015) *Time Management* and Misra and McKean's (2000) *College Students' Academic Stress and Its Relation to Their Anxiety, Time Management, and Leisure Satisfaction*. I will use these to help analyze the interviews and data I collected from other students. Considering all this information I will come to a conclusion on how students manage their time to ensure a better life at college.

Background

Effective time management strategies increase academic performance (Campbell & Svenson, 1992). Misra and McKean are researchers who researched the relationship between

time management, academic stress, anxiety, and leisure satisfaction and conducted an ethnographic study of 249 university undergraduates, which they separated by age and gender. They found that the more you managed your time in a strategic way, the more tasks/obligations were met with less stress; breaking down a large task into small tasks, to do over a structured time, is an example of their findings. The study showed that time management had the greatest impact on a student's level of stress. The researchers also found that female students obtain exceeding time management skills but less leisure time than males, therefore the stress levels were about the same. Misra and McKean also observed that the more a student learns and uses time management strategies, the more improved that student's problems solving skills become. From this, it can be drawn that managing time contributes to almost every aspect of being successful and happy in college as long a student is willing to prioritize and plan ahead.

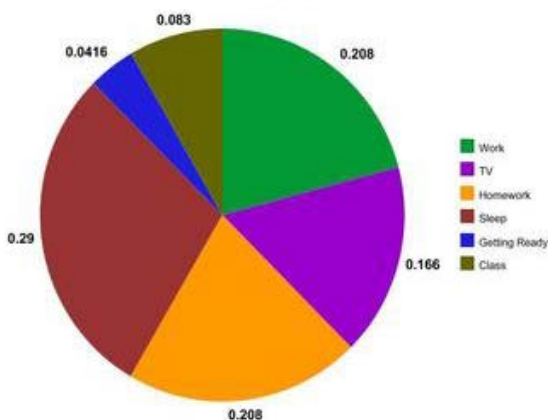
These findings relate to Comstock's in the sense that both show how important it is to have efficient time management skills and to know how to do so. The difference is that Misra and McKean (2000) focus on the way time management impacts students while Comstock's research focuses on how to manage time. Time management is easy to learn but it's difficult to put into practice since there are many different strategies. Anyone can manage their time well, it is just a matter of putting in the effort to find a strategy that works for them and turning it into a regular routine. This research finds any strategy for time management must include two things including prioritizing tasks from most important to least important. It can be difficult to distinguish the importance at first but over time it becomes easier by learning from yourself. The second is setting a schedule, which will be setup in a way that works best for you. One matter to remember when doing this, is to keep in mind the time you spend "lazing around". There are many tips out

there on what helps to stay on task such as turning your phone off, reviewing your schedule once in the morning and once at night, color coding, SAYING NO, etc. Getting rid of all distractions will greatly increase how well one distributes their time.

Do Bloomsburg University students use time management strategies? If so, what are they?

Method

“Ethnographers seek to immerse themselves in a social situation and become part of the group being investigated in order to understand the meanings that actors put upon phenomena or situations” (Brown, 2014, pg. 166). Misra and McKean collected ethnographic data while researching by throwing themselves into the life of a specific group (249 college students) and making observations. I will use the same method to answer these questions by reassessing the interviews and data I compiled from the a specific group; Bloomsburg University students. The questions asked will not only give information on how students manage their time, but what they do with their time.



Findings

First I took time diaries of students at Bloomsburg University and placed them in pie charts that represents how they each spent their last twenty four hours. To the left is one of the time diaries I collected from a single student. It is obvious that they spend most of their time sleeping, working, doing homework, and watching TV. This student obviously does not socialize too much but focuses on spending time

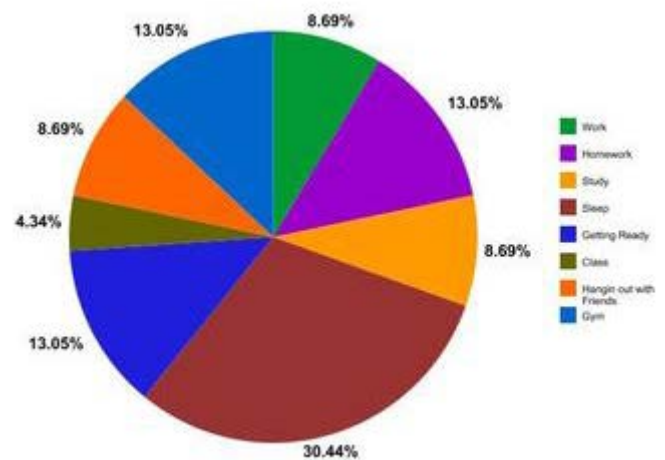
relaxing, academic progress, and working. Centering and balancing their time on these shows how this student has prioritized what is most important to them to spend time on. This proposes that the student does well in school since this is a big part of where their time is spent.

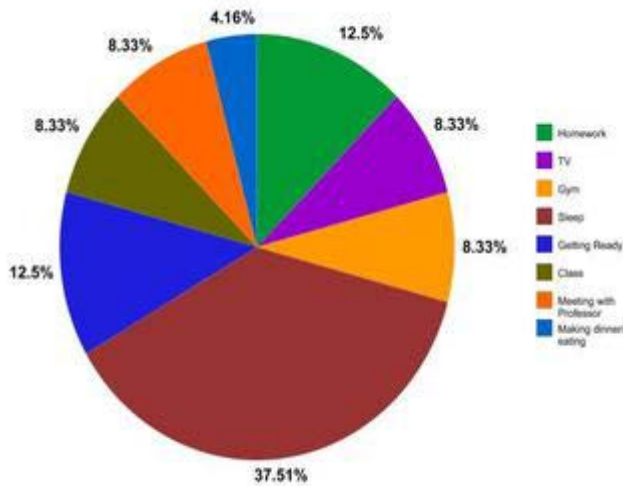
(Student 1, 2015)

The student's time diaries below show the student focuses mainly on sleeping, going to the gym, getting ready, doing homework, studying, hanging out with friends and going to work. This suggests that the student has very good time management skills since there are various demands to be met and balanced in one day which they set up according to what is important to them. After recognizing this I decided to use this student as a part of my interview process.

When I asked how they balance academics and social life they answered "I get my work done and then go out". I also asked if they keep a daily planner, which they said no. This made me wonder how they even out their time so well, so I asked which they said "I really just wing it. Every week is the same routine

pretty much". I was also told by this student that it took them time to figure out how to balance their time but once they did it made college life much simpler. For this person it is obvious that their time management strategy is sticking to the same routine and not letting things get in the way. This way is hard to go by but this person is a senior, giving them a lot more experience in





managing their time and knowing how to balance out their daily life in college. This gives them an advantage to do exceptionally well in college.

(Student 2, 2015)

The pie chart to the left is evidence that this student spends the majority of their time sleeping. They then spend the rest of their time between mostly doing homework and getting ready. Although the pie chart shows that this student spends their time on everything (except sleeping), in a balanced way, they should be spending most of their time on what is most important. The chart suggests this student does not know how to prioritize very well, which lead me to curiosity and using them for my interview.

I asked this student how they manage their time, they said “I have a weekly schedule on my phone”. I followed up by asking what the best way for them was to balance their time and got the reply, “To set aside more than enough time for everything to make sure it gets done right”. They also told me that they do well academically but could honestly do better by spending more time on schoolwork and studying. Student 3 can balance out their time pretty well by keeping a schedule but needs to prioritize it better. To do so they should spend a little less time sleeping along with less important items. It is great to fulfill everything you want to do, as this student does, but you also want to make sure you are spending the more time on the most important aspects of college. The better this student gets at prioritizing their time, the better they do academically.

(Student 3, 2015)

Conclusion

Analyzing the data I collected, it is obvious students go about their time in much different ways. Time management for Bloomsburg University students is recognizably applied in specific ways, according to an individual's preference. There are many obligations that are imperative for a students to fulfill on a daily basis, sometimes it can be hard to know how to. This proves how students, undoubtedly, should attain time management skills. The more that they do, the more they will excel academically just as Misra and McKean (2000) discovered during their research and study. The students also show that having some kind of schedule, whether it is a mental or physical one, and prioritizing obligations is an absolute when it comes to managing time, just as Comstock (2014) suggested.

Every college student is different but all have one thing in common, time management is a necessity of college life and learning how to do so properly. The data I, Misra and McKean (2000), and Comstock (2014) collected, all suggest students must prioritize everything and be aware of how they are spending their time. Doing so will create less stress and an easier road to college graduation. Overall, to manage your time, you must start with these basics and go from there to find what works best for you, since time management is individually based.

References

Misra, R., and M. McKean. "College Students' Academic Stress And Its Relation To Their Anxiety, Time Management, And Leisure Satisfaction." *American Journal Of Health Studies* 16.(2000): 41-51. *British Library Document Supply Centre Inside Serials & Conference Proceedings*. Web. 24 Feb. 2015.

Comstock, Nancy. "Time Management." *Salem Press Encyclopedia* (2015): *Research Starters*. Web. 25 Feb. 2015.

Brown, Ann1. "The Place Of Ethnographic Methods In Information Systems Research." *International Journal Of Multiple Research Approaches* 8.2 (2014): 166-178. *Education Source*. Web. 24 Feb. 2015.

Student 1. (2015). Personal page. Retrieved from
<http://foundations15b.wikispaces.com/CarlsonCLUE3> and
<http://foundations15b.wikispaces.com/CarlsonClueStep1> . February 21.

Student 2. (2015). Personal page. Retrieved from
<http://foundations15b.wikispaces.com/CarlsonCLUE3> and
<http://foundations15b.wikispaces.com/CarlsonClueStep1> . February 21.

Student 3. (2015). Personal page. Retrieved from
<http://foundations15b.wikispaces.com/CarlsonCLUE3> and
<http://foundations15b.wikispaces.com/CarlsonClueStep1> . February 21.